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RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE

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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: ANDHRA POLICE KILL KEY MAOIST LEADERS

REF: 08 CHENNAI 379

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Police in Andhra Pradesh (AP) killed two top members of a violent Maoist group ("Naxalite") in an encounter on May 24. They also recovered several firearms. The police link one of those killed to several high-profile terrorist attacks, including assassination attempts against two Chief Ministers in the state and assassinations of other government officials. No police were killed in the encounter, and police statistics show that Maoist attacks in AP have declined this year. End Summary.

Police kill senior Maoist leaders

¶2. (SBU) Andhra Pradesh Police informed us in a written statement that they had killed two top Maoist leaders in a May 24 encounter, dealing a "significant blow" to the Maoist activity in the state. (The shootout has also been reported in the media.) The document identifies the dead as Patel Sudhakar Reddy, a member of the Maoist Central Committee and Military Commission, and Kanugula Venkataiah, a member of the Maoists' state committee. The encounter, which occurred in the Tadvai forests in AP's Warangal district (approximately 150 km northeast of Hyderabad), also led to the recovery of an AK-47 rifle, an 8 mm rifle, a 9 mm pistol, Maoist propaganda, and INR 20,000 (approximately USD 400) in cash, according to the document. No police were killed in the exchange of fire, and the document states that police were engaged in "combing operations" when they spotted a group of armed Maoists.

Reddy's rap sheet

¶3. (SBU) The police document describes Reddy as an Osmania University graduate and an intellectual leader of the Maoist organization. It describes him as 49 years old, with multiple aliases including: Suryam, Srikanth, Venkat Reddy, Ashok Reddy, Damodar Redd, Murali, Sudheer, Sharma, and Vikas. It also describes him as a native of Kurthi Ravala Cheruvu in Mahbubnagar district, and accuses him of masterminding the assassination attempts on the then-Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu near Tirupati in November 2003 and on the former Chief Minister Janardhan Reddy in Nellore in September 2007. The police also accuse him of assassinating former Home Minister A. Madhava Reddy in 1999 and senior police officers K.L. Vyas and Umesh Chandra. Authorities had offered a INR 1.2 million (USD 25,000) reward for his capture. Police claim that Sudhakar Reddy was in charge of military activities in Orissa, Bihar, Jharkhand and Maharashtra, and that he was also working to strengthen the Maoist movement in Karnataka.

Other victim a technical expert

¶4. (SBU) The police identified the other accused Maoist slain in the encounter as 29-year-old Kanugula Venkataiah (alias Prasanna and Bhujanga Reddy), a native of Inapur village in Warangal district. According to the police document, he was a member of the Maoists' state committee and a member of its technical wing. Police allege that he oversaw a variety of terrorism-related activities, including

work involving improvised explosive devices, rocket launchers, communication equipment, and directional fragmentation mines.

Police claim success in reducing Maoist attacks in AP

¶ 15. (SBU) Police claim that they have been able to reduce Maoist violence in the state by targeting leaders and specific groups. They claim that the Naxalites have lost approximately 400 cadres since the collapse of peace talks in 2005, including many top leaders (reftel). In addition, hundreds of Maoists have surrendered in past years. Police statistics show that incidents of Maoist violence have declined significantly since 2005, when 186 civilians were killed. They killed 42 civilians in 2008, a 30 percent decline from the year before. The police say that seven civilians have died in Naxalite violence this year, while 26 Maoists have surrendered.

Police assess Reddy's death as a serious blow

¶ 16. (SBU) A senior police official in charge of combating Maoists in AP told us that Reddy's death will help curb the extremists' operational capacity and reduce their morale. When asked about the possibility of Maoist retaliation for Reddy's killing, he said, "one never knows," but admitted that AP's police are taking "precautionary measures" throughout the state. (Note: Although the police official was unwilling to elaborate on the types of "precautionary measures" the police might be taking, our contacts in and around Hyderabad have not observed any noticeable difference in police postures or procedures. End Note.)

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Expansion or Expulsion

¶ 17. (SBU) Comment: Even as AP's Maoists attempt to spread their violent tactics to neighboring states, they are coming under increasing pressure on their home turf. The state's success in clamping down on Maoist activities in AP was particularly noticeable during the recent elections: while other states experienced Maoist attacks, AP remained quiet. End Comment.

¶ 18. (U) Consulate General Hyderabad reviewed this cable.

KAPLAN